London Fog Cake

Classic Chocolate Cake

2 ½ cups all purpose flour

1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

2 ½ teaspoons baking powder

¾ teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon salt

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons grapeseed or canola oil

2 cups granulated sugar

2 large eggs

1 large egg yolk

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

½ teaspoon almond extract

1 ½ cups whole milk

1 cup hot strong-brewed coffee

1. Preheat over to 350 degrees. Grease and flour three 8-inch cakes pans and set aside.
2. Sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt and set aside.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment, beat together the oil and sugar on medium speed for 2 minutes. With the mixer on, add the eggs, egg yolks, vanilla, and almond extract. Stop the mixer and scrape down the bowl.
4. Turn the mixer to low and add the flour mixture in three batches, alternating with the milk, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Stop the mixer and scrape down the bowl. With the mixer on low, stream in the coffee. Mix on medium-low for no more than 30 seconds, or until combined.
5. Evenly divide the batter among the prepared pans. Bake for 23 to 25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cakes comes out clean. Let them cool on a wire rack fro 10 to 15 minutes before removing the cakes from their pans.

Earl Grey Buttercream

2 cups unsalted butter, at room temperature

¼ cup loose Earl Grey tea

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (150 ml) egg whites, from about 4 to 5 large eggs

1 ¼ cups granulated sugar

1 ½ teaspoons vanilla bean paste, or seeds from ½ vanilla bean

1. Place 1 cup of the butter in a saucepan with the loose tea. Heat over medium heat until the butter melts, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and let the tea steep for 5 minutes more. Strain the butter through a fine mesh sieve set over a bowl and refrigerate it until is reached the same consistency as softened butter, 20 to 30 minutes. Small bits of tea may remains in the butter.
2. Place the egg whites and sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer. Whisk them together by hand to combine. Fill a medium saucepan with a few inches of water and place it over medium-high heat. Place the mixer bowl on top of the saucepan to create a double-boiler. The bottom of the bowl should not touch the water. Whisking intermittently, heat the egg mixture until it registers about 155-160 degrees on a candy thermometer or is hot to the touch. Carefully fit the mixer bowl onto the stand mixer.
3. With the whisk attachment, beat the egg white mixture on high speed for 8 to 10 minutes, until it holds medium-stiff peaks. When done, the outside of the mixer bowl should return to room temperature and no residual heat should be escaping from the meringue out of the top of the bowl. Stop the mixer and swap out the whisk attachment for the paddle.
4. With the mixer on low speed, add the vanilla, tea-infused butter, and 1 cup butter, a couple tablespoons at a time. Once incorporated, turn the mixer to medium-high and bet until the buttercream is silky smooth, about 3 to 5 minutes.

Salted Caramel Sauce

¾ cup granulated sugar

2 tablespoons light corn syrup

2 tablespoons water

½ cup heavy cream

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, diced

¾ teaspoon sea salt, or to taste

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Place the sugar, corn syrup, and water in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Stir to combine.
2. Heat over high heat, occasionally swirling the pan, until it turns a medium golden amber color (about 8 to 10 minutes). The sugar mixture will begin to rapidly boil before slowing down and darkening in color. Remove the saucepan form the heat once the correct color is reached and the bubbles start to subside (the darker the color, the deeper the caramel flavor).
3. Slowly and carefully whisk in the cream.
4. The mixture will foam up and sputter, so stand clear and keep stirring.
5. Add the butter and continue to stir until melted. Add the salt and vanilla and stir to combine. Pour the caramel into a heat-safe container and let it cool until it reaches your desired consistency or refrigerate until use. It will thicken as it cools.

Assembly

1. Place the bottom layer of cake on a cake plate or serving dish. Spread on about ½ to ¾ cup of the buttercream with an offset spatula. Top with the next layer of cake and repeat.
2. Frost the cake with the remaining buttercream. Using an icing comb to crate the stripe finish (if desired) and refrigerate until set, about 15 to 20 minutes.
3. Pour caramel sauce over the chilled cake, starting with about a ½ cup, letting it drip over the edges. Add more caramel as necessary.